

FRENCH INDO-CHINA

young party. Nationalism is still to be the means of arriving at communism, and their prevalent misery exploited as a method of arousing the masses.

The brutality of the French suppression of the communist movement has been severely criticized both in the colony and in France. The government claimed as justification that the Red Terror, already guilty of torturing its enemies, would have unleashed an orgy of crime and cruelty only possible among Orientals. In assembling the evidence of communist brutality in 1930-31 the Indo-Chinese police stated that the slightest success would have had an incalculable effect upon the masses, who believe that Heaven thus selects one side for approval, and upon possible foreign supporters. So-called preventive measures have always the disadvantage of depending for their justification upon hypothesis, which can be used by both sides with equal conviction. Certainly the evidence brought forward at the grotesque trial of the Foreign Legionnaires was damaging to the administration, and to Robin in particular, who had encouraged their brutality. If, as the light penalty they were given indicated, it was unjust to punish soldiers who were only carrying out orders, it was criminally negligent to have simultaneously exonerated those in high positions who were responsible. Acting on the assumption that communism was not a mass movement the police have concentrated on the arrest of its leaders. The party's secret organization here proved effective. Not only were incriminating documents unavailable but native official co-operation, through collusion or fear, as well as proximity to the frontiers, complicated the search. Despite their numerical inadequacy the Indo-Chinese police

did a remarkable work. A country larger than France with over twenty million inhabitants, most of whom were unidentifiable, is policed by only 341 French agents. The rapidity with which they had to act—and most of the 1930 plots were aired in time—inevitably resulted in much injustice. Though it was natives who applied the time-honoured methods of the Anomite government for producing evidence the French public was honied by this use of torture, with the knowledge, if not the actual participation, of French officials. The Third Degree, fashionable among Occidental police, may be no better, but it is less obviously brutal. Andr   Viollis's *Indackine* SOS, though in many ways unfinished, reproduced with photographic honesty what she saw of the terrible prison conditions, the arbitrary injustice, and wholesale arrests of the ignorant and innocent. The whole colony was honeycombed with spies, and identification became a profitable duty. It is hard to